



Helen Whatley
Minister of State for Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Tel: 0344 800 8020

Email: tom.mccabe@norfolk.gov.uk

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Dear Minister

Norfolk's Care Home Resilience Plan

I am writing in response to your letter of 14 May 2020 to set out Norfolk's Care Home Resilience Plan.

The Plan benefits from the already strong foundations of joint collaboration across the Norfolk and Waveney health and social care system, together with strong working relations between commissioners and the Norfolk Care Association. This has ensured swift and decisive steps to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Norfolk and Waveney, providing a clear and purposeful programme of actions with three over-arching aims:

- To provide a swift and effective response to outbreaks, minimising their impact
- To prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the care sector through best practice infection control and health protection practice
- To provide a framework of support which ensures the care sector in Norfolk is sustainable into the future.

This Plan brings together the extensive response already in place and identifies where further actions need to take place to strengthen for the future. There is collective confidence that the actions to date have been effective, and clear arrangements for implementing further steps are set out in this plan. In the time available we have shared it and gathered input from key partners and stakeholders in the NHS and County Council. In addition, we have sought and gained feedback from Norfolk Care Association, Healthwatch, the Norfolk Older People's Strategic Partnership, Norfolk Resilience Forum and the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board through input from the Chairman.

It is intended to be an open and honest picture of the partnership's response and in publishing it we will continue to seek input and engagement going forward.

The detailed plan is attached; what follows here are the main areas of action to date:

Infection Control

Our Aim: Norfolk will encourage and upskill care home providers to observe national guidance on preventing and controlling infections; including use of PPE, isolation practices, decontamination and cleaning processes

As an immediate response to the Covid 19 pandemic a new joint service between Norfolk County Council (Adult Social Services and Public Health) and Norfolk and Waveney CCG was developed to support care homes and control and prevent outbreaks. Providing a 7 day support service, the joint team delivers:

- The Care Provider Incident Room (CPIR) managed by the CCG health system ensuring a single point of contact for care homes to access support, advice and guidance and to receive outbreak reports from PHE
- The Outbreak Management Team (OMT) managed by the local authority as a collaboration between Adult Social Services Department (ASSD) and Public Health (PH) teams. A Multi-Disciplinary Team with Quality Monitoring Officers (QMOs) at the centre, the team manage existing outbreaks and provide wrap around support to providers
- Daily outbreak management meetings take place to review and risk assess new and existing outbreaks, following robust standard operating procedures. Clinical input from Infection Prevention and Control team ensures appropriate skilled professionals are deployed to support providers. Teams are able to access system wide daily dashboards bringing together key data required to manage outbreaks and new infections

Complementing the daily review, all care homes are called on a two-weekly cycle by the Quality Assurance Team to discuss any issues one to one with Registered Managers. This is in addition to regular virtual Quality Monitoring Visits to support any providers previously requiring input and support. Over the next month the priority is to strengthen and expand training to priority homes, and to complete a Train the Trainer programme.

Communication with providers has been significantly increased; regular letters, briefings, advice sheets and web updates are provided, and a central hub for enquiries ensures a swift response 7 days a week. Twice weekly analysis of enquiry and action response times completed and shared with operational leads as part of our continuing improvement culture.

Working with our CCG and community health provider colleagues, infection prevention & control nurses are available and provide:

- Training to priority homes identified by The Outbreak Management Team
- Train the Trainers programme. Ongoing programme to train all care home managers and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) leads by the 29th May 2020
- Input to the key topics covered in a joint CCG/NCC weekly letter to all providers and shared on the NCC provider web site

Testing

Our Aim: Norfolk will ensure care homes are able to access appropriate and timely testing for all residents and staff

Local testing arrangements are strong. Using local laboratories results are turned around within 24 hours and the results are also then available within the primary care records to enhance clinical oversight and management of residents. We have tested more care homes than elsewhere in the Region. The local testing service has also enabled excellent support to the care homes in relation to Infection Prevention and Control and use of PPE. This approach has been well received.

Testing is in line with the national guidance prioritising new outbreaks. As directed through the Norfolk Outbreak Team, local testing teams conduct testing for new outbreaks for care home residents. All care home staff – symptomatic and asymptomatic are able to access the local staff testing service, as well as the national route.

A prioritisation list has been produced and sent to the national testing team to support Norfolk's whole home testing roll out using both national and locally determined prioritisation guidelines.

Communication has been sent to all providers encouraging them to access whole home testing, informing them of the process and how they can access the national portal, the national support line and local support through Care Provider Incident Room. Those homes who have not yet accessed the portal will be followed up and encourage to do so. Plans are in development to quality assure this process and monitor the timeliness of results etc

Regular, clear communication to care providers has helped direct them to appropriate, speedy testing.

Work is underway to develop a performance dashboard to bring together key metrics on local testing which will support the Director of Public Health to co-ordinate and prioritise testing according to need in Norfolk.

A jointly agreed process for testing patients before they leave all three acute hospitals, community hospitals, and step down facilities in Norfolk is in place and being followed. This ensures that tests are timely before discharge and there is a clear, consistent process and set of criteria for mitigating risks in care home settings. Testing is also in place for people being admitted to care homes from their own homes.

As part of our local offering, all care home staff (symptomatic and asymptomatic) are able to access a staff testing service at one of three acute testing facilities across the county as well as via the national route.

Norfolk testing strategy will be updated to include how antibody testing and track and trace will be provided for care home residents and staff.

Personal Protective Equipment and Clinical Equipment

Our Aim: Norfolk will continue to ensure care homes have access to Covid 19 specific PPE and clinical equipment and the workforce are skilled to use appropriately

Around 1.3 million items of PPE have been distributed to the care sector by the Norfolk team.

There is a robust proactive process to support care providers and an escalation framework which ensures swift and speedy prioritisation and distribution to those requesting emergency supplies.

An emergency PPE team processes providers' requests and there is ongoing analysis of request data to establish persistent problem areas to focus support, including training and guidance around appropriate equipment and use. Through twice weekly monitoring and tracking calls, the emergency PPE team directs supplies to those that have the greatest need. New guidance is interpreted swiftly and communicated to providers as required.

Initial PPE supplies were for urgent and emergency use and distributed as a backstop for care homes. Through the efforts of the health and social care cell of the Norfolk Resilience Forum, there was good co-ordination local supplies and donations of PPE. This was backed by a strong communications plan which increased availability at a critical point in the pandemic.

The council is now moving to a proactive approach ensuring more stocks are pushed out to care homes to support infection control. A review will be undertaken to maximise NCC spending power as NRF is scaled back, securing medium to long-term plans for provision of PPE including aligning new governance and performance indicators.

The enhanced care in care home offer will be in place in all 105 GP practices in Norfolk and Waveney to support care homes. This includes to date enabling each care home to have an NHSnet email address. We are scoping video consultation capabilities in care homes to assess equipment; through May 2020, care homes are to be provided with specific equipment (thermometers / oximeters) and the necessary training.

Workforce support

Our Aim: Norfolk will engage with the providers to minimise staff movement between care homes and work to stop infection spreading between locations whilst continuing to support the national recruitment campaign and encourage Norfolk residents to consider a career in care

Direct engagement with providers is on-going to ascertain recruitment needs via phoning care providers and signposting to available resources. The national capacity tracker can further help us to identify those providers that have indicated workforce pressures, enabling us to offer targeted consultancy advice and guidance. Our care homes, in the main, have maintained good levels of staffing and care for residents. We are encouraging all care home to 'block book' agency staff where this is appropriate to minimise the spread of infection between different care settings.

Strategic workforce issues are overseen and driven by Norfolk and Waveney Health and Care Partnership redeployment leads allowing a whole-system response. A key task for this group is to ensure recruitment of clinical, non-clinical and volunteer staff to additional community beds which provides capacity to acute hospitals and care home sector.

To date, health has benefitted from a high number of returners to the NHS, but this has not been mirrored across social care. Norfolk is maximising the benefits of the national recruitment campaign, working with the lead national agency to align messages and timings with county initiatives.

In partnership with Norfolk and Suffolk Care Support Ltd, a locally focused recruitment campaign has been launched.

The existing web-based platform, [Norfolk Care Careers](#) is being used to advertise vacancies. Since the launch of the campaign this has resulted in 5182 new users to the site. The recruitment drive includes working closely with key stakeholders including colleges, district councils, the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, NORCA, the health sector and the job centre to inform and direct individuals and businesses.

Moving ahead, the intention is to enhance the regional Memorandum of Understanding MOU to include redeployment of NHS staff to the care home sector. Critical to this will be resolving the indemnity issue for care sector staff.

A model is being developed for a peripatetic workforce that involves recruitment to roles across health and care who will work on a shift basis aligned to the localities/PCNs to build resilience in domiciliary care and potentially the care home sector. This model could attract a new workforce into areas where there is a level of unmet need as well as providing enhanced support to care homes alongside PCN initiatives. The feasibility will depend on a number of factors including financial resources and resolving indemnity issues.

For staff who proactively choose to stay separate from their families, a number of countywide hotels and other accommodation outlets (example UEA) have been identified offering rooms and longer-term accommodation arrangements. Wellbeing support for social care workforce– we recognise this is going to be critical, and ongoing – currently signposting to national and local STP offer to front line health and social care workforce

Financial Support

Our Aim: Working with Government, Norfolk will ensure financial support for adult social care providers to manage and stop the spread of Covid 19

Norfolk County Council has prioritised the care market financial stability throughout its response to COVID-19. Phase one of our financial support has included, but not limited to:

- Cashflow assurance for those markets with variable or reducing demand.
- An upfront payment of 6% of 12 weeks of care fees. This covers the period April to June 2020.
- A process for providers to reclaim additional expenses over and above the 6% payment. This covers the period 19th March to 10th June 2020.
- Support to those provider markets who are providing additional support whilst our Day Care services are not wholly available.
- Supply of over 1.3 million pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) through the Norfolk Resilience Forum and Council procured stock.
- A provider website allowing direct access to Central Government and New Anglia LEP Growth Hub financial support

At the time of writing this letter, proposals for phase 2 financial support are being finalised, and are likely to include:

- a) Continued payments to Residential and Nursing providers on actual contract levels.
- b) Continued payments to home support providers under the minimum/fixed income levels (with top-up for excess usage). We will work with providers to agree a phased movement back towards actual usage payments by late summer/early Autumn.
- c) An additional provider support payment for July (4 weeks) of 6% for the same provider group in scope for phase 1.
- d) Extended the timescale of our provider additional cost claim form for a further 8 weeks (covering the period to 5th August) for the same provider group in scope for phase 1.

New Infection Control Fund

Based on Norfolk bed count of 9,650, adjusted for cost of living ratios, Norfolk has been allocated £12,386,399 and covers all specialisms and respite beds.

Funding will be distributed to Local Authorities in two equal instalments in May and July 2020. Care home providers should expect to receive 75% of each Local Authority instalment within 10 working days of the grant being received by the Council, providing they have registered and completed the National Capacity Tracker and recognise their responsibilities listed within the infection control fund spending guidelines

The second payment will be dependent on a) first payment spent in full and b) expenditure is aligned to the infection control fund guidelines. For Government reporting purposes, records and evidence will need to be retained by care providers receiving the grant detailing how the money has been spent:

- Ensuring staff who are isolating receive normal wages while doing so
- Ensuring staff only work in one care home
- Limiting or cohorting staff to individual groups of residents, floors or wings and to support segregation of residents who are Covid 19 positive
- To recruit additional staff where appropriate
- To enable staff to avoid public transport
- To provide accommodation where staff are proactively choosing to live separately from their families

Approach agreed locally to providing additional community capacity

A joint CCG - Adult Social Services response has provided comprehensive modelling to inform commissioning of extra capacity. In total, 143 additional beds have come on stream in the system and phase two will see another 280. An additional 486 hours a week capacity in enhanced home care to provide alternatives to bed-based capacity has also been put in place.

A dedicated step-down facility, Cawston Lodge, has been opened. When fully operationally it will have capacity for 42 patients; this capacity will be introduced in phases as needed. The specially opened care home will be staffed primarily by reablement staff from the council's own in-house reablement service, and from home care staff from a local agency.

A number of additional sites were subject to option appraisal, and the need for any further capacity is being reviewed jointly by Community Capacity and Discharge Delivery Group, bringing together CCG and ASSD commissioners.

Governance

Our Aim: Norfolk will review the local care market, including all relevant data and take immediate actions where necessary to support providers

A Care Homes Leadership Group, bringing together senior CCG, ASSD and Public Health directors has provided direction and oversight of the care homes resilience plan to date. As a leadership team, we are fully focused on trying to protect and preserve life for those residents in Norfolk care homes. We know our partners in the wider system share this focus, giving local leadership and oversight in our communities such as a named clinical lead for each care home.

As the work broadens to encompass further comprehensive preventative actions to ensure medium to long term sustainability of the care sector, the intention is to establish a joint Strategic Care Homes Oversight Group which will provide overall leadership and governance for the health and social care system.

I trust this gives you the information you need to assure Ministers of the determination and commitment of the Norfolk Health and Care system to work collectively and collaboratively to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on our care homes and build a sustainable care market for the future.

Yours sincerely



Tom McCabe
Head of Paid Service

Copy to

Melanie Craig, Chief Officer and Executive Lead, Norfolk & Waveney Health and Care Partnership

Cath Byford, Chief Nurse for the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups for Norfolk and Waveney

Dr Louise Smith, Director of Public Health, Norfolk County Council

James Wilson, Director of Quality and Transformation, Norfolk County Council

Gary Heathcote, Director of Commissioning, Norfolk County Council